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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

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INFORMATION REPORT

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DATE DISTR. 5 Nov. 1951

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and P. C. Joshi concerning
his Publication India Today

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The following is the unedited contents of a Communist Party of India (CPI) Central Secretariat communication to all Party members concerning P. C. Joshi. The document contains:

- (1) A statement of the CPI's dissatisfaction with Joshi's India Today;
- (2) An extract from an article in India Today, August 1951; and
- (3) A copy of a letter sent by the Secretariat to Joshi, castigating him for his editorial sins in India Today.¹

Dear Comrades,

Com. P. C. Joshi, as you all know, was readmitted into the Party in May 1951, on the ground that his expulsion had been wrong and unjustified. The Central Committee (CC) did not take any definite decision about the journal India Today which he had already started beyond stating that he should not issue anything independently of the Party.

The Politburo (PB) meeting that took place on 29 May, two days after the CC meeting had ended, discussed this question. It felt that although it was not desirable that a comrade like Joshi who had been the General Secretary of the Party for 12 years should be allowed to continue a journal which the Party Centre, for various reasons, was not in a position to guide, it would be inadvisable in the existing circumstances and inner-Party situation to direct him to stop the journal. Such a step, the PB thought, might create misunderstanding and bitterness. At the same time, the PB felt that if Joshi expressed in his journal views not in conformity with the line of the Party, it was bound to create confusion in the Party ranks.

The PB therefore asked Prakash to meet Joshi, discuss the matter with him and explain to him the PB's attitude towards his journal.

Comrade Joshi had understood the CC resolution to mean that the CC had decided to stop his journal and he expressed strong resentment against

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this "factional decision" as he characterized it.

Com. Prakash assured Com. Joshi that such was not their intention but that the paper should not be conducted in a way that damages the party or that is inconsistent with the line and policy of the Party and its slogans. He made some criticism of the first issue of India Today.

Comrade Joshi was also asked to withdraw from circulation the "inner-party documents" which he had been circulating. He pleaded that they had already gone out and were in the hands of the readers.

Subsequently, when the PB found that even in the July number of India Today Joshi had advertised the "inner-Party documents" it felt compelled to write to him to stop such practice and hand over all copies of the documents to the United Provinces Provincial Organizing Committee (UPPOG) Secretary.

In the July number of India Today, an article appeared on the Krishak-Mazdoor Praja Party which the PB members considered incorrect and which therefore had to be openly criticized in Cross Roads.

In the August number of India Today, Joshi has written an article which we consider to be highly objectionable and disruptive and a violation of all Party principles. Further, we are of the opinion that the political outlook that permeates the article is dangerous. Since the subject-matter is not one which can be discussed publicly we have decided to send to all comrades the relevant part of Joshi's article and our letter to him.

While our letter was being drafted, we received the September number of India Today in which Comrade Joshi has openly attacked the Party's slogan of withdrawal of the Kashmir issue from UNO as "irresponsible demagoguery". In the last paragraphs of our letter to Joshi, we have dealt with this point also.

GREETINGS,

SECRETARIAT.

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RED FLAG IN KANPUR

P. C. JOSHI

FROM INDIA TODAY - AUGUST 1961

Quite a number of Trade Union leaders had promised to write for India Today but not one of them had kept his promise. The excuse was being too busy, but the reality is that there is not enough clarity of mind yet to be able to write with confidence. So I thought of getting the correspondents of India Today to interview the leaders of old respected Trade Unions and get them to speak out on the problems of Trade Union revival. It was with this assignment that I went to Kanpur on July 10. I had already written to Santosh Chandra Kapur, the General Secretary of the Mazdoor Sabha, about the object of my visit and he organized in his room a heart-warming meeting of the four of us, all PURANE KANPURWALE (Old Kanpur hands): Sonelal, second in mass popularity only to Yusuf, Ashok Bose whom the workers call VAKIL SAHEB not because he is professionally a lawyer, but because he has been appearing on their behalf in the Labour Commissioner's Court, myself and Santoshi himself.

I explained to Sonelal the importance of this feature of India Today: let him recount his experiences of the recent past and the present in rebuilding the movement shattered by the last three years of sectarianism. In subsequent issues leaders of other Trade Union centres will be invited to express themselves and thus there will be the much-needed pooling of experience and

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India Today would have done its bit towards collecting local experiences which alone can serve as a solid basis for formulating sound Trade Union tactics.

RESULTS OF SECTARIANISM.

My first question was: "What has been the actual damage done to Mazdoor Sabha by three years of sectarianism?"

Sonelal's genial looks suddenly disappeared and he said with utmost indignation: "CHAUPAT HO GAYA (Everything got smashed up); KAMRED CHAUPAT! As he took time to cool down Ashok stated "Never again will we let anyone play with Mazdoor Sabha never again will we let the false sense of loyalty render us passive. Nothing is left, literally nothing; we have to start all over again. You must have seen the Mazdoor Sabha office grounds. Do you remember your old slogan of making it the best park in Kanpur with workers' labour and money? See, what has become of it? I admitted that tears came to my eyes as I saw the vast grounds let out to the building contractors who had piled up all round their bricks and sand. It looked so out of place and ugly, and what is worse there was no place left even to hold workers' rallies. Ashok went on: "If the sectarians had a few more months they would have let out on hire the Mazdoor Sabha building too!" Kanpur is among the few places where the workers have their own building for Trade Union Office, a meeting hall and grounds.

"ALUWALI HARTAL"

In the meanwhile Sonelal had pulled himself up. He stated that sectarianism in Kanpur, unlike other places, began not after but just before the Second Congress of the Party, with the January, 1948 Textile General Strike which the workers call ALUWALI HARTAL. (The Potato strike; from the fantastic rise in the price of potatoes during those days which figured prominently in the strike agitation.) Kanpur workers had won fewer concessions during the war days and so their post-war discontent was intense but the organizational position was weak and the INTUS had successfully penetrated into some mills. So the bosses' game was to precipitate a premature General Strike, smash up the Mazdoor Sabha and clear the ground for the INTUC. The owners backed up by the Government had tried the game twice and both times the Mazdoor Sabha leadership had successfully fought back the offensive through strike action and had retreated in time to consolidate the gains and undertake serious preparations for well-planned General Strike.

When the new (Sectarian) line came in December, 1947 and heated discussions for the Party Congress began, Kanpur was made the first victim of experimenting with the new line. Provocations from the bosses were mounting and our then leadership rushed headlong into the trap. The General Strike was a miserable failure. We lost all our cadres except a few who had gone underground in time. 150 experienced worker militants were arrested, including almost all the members of Mill Committees. We thus lost our live links with the mass of workers inside the mills and the failure of the strike damaged our mass influence which the INTUC was not slow to exploit.

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FUTILE GENERAL STRIKE CALLS.

The contact with the second layer of worker contacts was being painfully rebuilt when in the June 1948 Victoria Mill Strike ultra-left slogans were given which led to further loss of morale among the militants.

The Government pressed home its offensive. In late 1948, the entire District Committee of the Party got arrested. Raids on and search of Mazdoor Sabha office and militants' homes became a regular occurrence. As the 9 March railway strike agitation began, there was a round-up of the remaining cadres.

The more links we lost with the mass of workers, the more "left" we went in words. Calls for General Strike were given every other day and none came off, demoralizing the workers and making us the laughing-stock among the politically-minded intelligentsia.

We had five or six functioning branches of the Mazdoor Sabha. They all closed down. Workers stopped coming to the Mazdoor Sabha office; and ultimately it too remained closed most of the time.

The Kanpur worker repudiated the sectarian policy by not carrying it out in practice; but just because it was Party policy, it demoralized him. Old worker militants tried, in various polite ways, to escape keeping contact with the under-ground leaders. Workers' Party members expressed their inability to work either inside the mill or in the locality. Bickerings began and demoralization grew and grew and gripped all.

RED FLAG BLACKENED

Formerly, the Mazdoor Sabha had the greatest ROB (prestige) in the Labour Commissioner's office. Workers used to bring their cases to us and all admitted that our leaders argued and defended the workers' cases most effectively. Their painstaking work had won all the relief that was possible to extract from the Labour Commissioner. Under sectarian influence, we gave up this work on principle. The INTUC and the Socialists stepped into our place and increased their contacts and influence thereby and at our cost.

"In a word, comrade, the sectarians did everything to blacken the Red Flag," stated Sonelal.....

* * * * *

LETTER FROM SECRETARIAT TO COMRADE P. C. JOSHI

12 September 1951

Dear Com. P. C. Joshi,

In the August number of India Today which unfortunately we received very late this time, we read the reportage "Red Flag in Kanpur" published by you in your own name.

The publication of such an article in the open press raises grave political and organizational issues which you who occupied the position of General Secretary of the Party for 12 years ought to have realized. What matters is not whether you have correctly reported what comrades Sonelal, Ashok Bose and others reported to you. Since you are a Party member, they had every right to discuss the tactics of the Party with you and freely express their views. The question is whether it was right on your part to publish such things in open press.

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Had the UP Provincial Committee, Kanpur District Committee, or even the Mazdoor Sabha fraction discussed these matters and come to a conclusion? Even if they had done so, did they authorize its publication? Under which article of Party Constitution and by what cannon of Party practice did you decide to publish in the open press opinions expressed to you by party members in the course of private discussion?

The so-called review of the past that you have presented in the first two pages of your article is a one-sided and distorted presentation of history. It may contain some correct points but the whole basic outlook is wrong. More, it contains vile slanders against the Party.

Your "review" flows from the bankrupt reformist thesis that repression is mainly the result of sectarianism, a thesis which the Party rejected long ago, a thesis which is factually wrong, which glosses over the crimes of the Government, fails to rouse revolutionary indignation against it. Further you wrote "when the new (sectarian) line came in December, 1947..." May we know which Party document, which international authority permitted you to make such a sweeping generalization about the entire line since December 1947?

Your article not merely gives a distorted and one-sided understanding of the past, it makes gloomy defeatist and demoralizing generalizations about the present. We can understand comrades Sonelal and Ashok saying "Everything got smashed up", "Mother is left, literally nothing". We can understand their feelings - but was it your job to publish such expressions, or was it your job to counter such sentiments by pointing out the truth that everything is not smashed up, that hatred against the Government was never so strong as today, that despite the serious mistakes committed by us which did grave damage, our Party is looked upon by the mass of people as the most fighting Party in the country, a party which never betrayed them but which stood by them unlike the treacherous Right-Wing leadership of the Socialist Party? Instead of rousing comrades, instead of shaking off despondency, you glorify defeatism - and call that reportage. Even the facts given by you in your own article show how false the all-is-smashed-up estimate is.

Not content with all this, you approvingly quote Comrade Sonelal who is supposed to have said "sectarians did everything to blacken the Red Flag" and you give "Red Flag blackened" as one of the sub-headings of your article!

You know well that even when criticizing the many outrageously reformist, sectarian and class collaborationist mistakes of the war period, the Party has never, so far as we remember, used such false and slanderous terms in relation to Party members even in inner-Party documents, but you publish them in an open journal. And you claim that yours is a "patriotic and democratic" journal. What kind of patriotism is it, what kind of democracy is it, that permits you to spread vile slanders against the Party, to propagate the lie that Communists have "blackened the Red Flag"?

Contrast what you have written with what we said about the Party in the Election Manifesto - a document which you know has been published in the Lasting Peace and Peoples' Democracy (LPPD) journal and Pravda.

"Tens of thousands of Communists have been thrown in jails and detention camps, thousands have been tortured and killed but the Red Flag has never been lowered before the oppressors."

Perhaps you will call this sheer demagoguery.

Contrast what you have written with what even Pandit Nehru said in the AICC meeting about members of our Party, about their "spirit of sacrifice, great zeal and robust confidence" and you will see the length to which you have gone, the depth to which you have sunk while playing the self-assumed role of crusader against sectarianism.

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You will of course argue like a lawyer that you denounced not all Party members but only "sectarians". Such quibbling may appear "clever" in a bourgeois court of law but it has no place inside the Communist Party. Neither sectarians nor reformists blackened the Red Flag. Those who betray the workers, go over to imperialists and the vested interests and dishonour the Red Flag blacken their own faces - not the Red Flag which no power on earth can blacken.

Even if Comrade Sonelal did say what you have reported, it was your duty as a Communist, as a loyal Party member, to pull him up, to point out how wrong he was instead of giving wide publicity to it.

Self-criticism is necessary, self-criticism is essential but what you have done in a gossipy, light-hearted and casual way and in cheap journalistic style is not self-criticism but indulgence in vile slander against the Party, slanders that even the avowed enemies of the Party have hesitated to spread.

What is quite obvious now is that when we asked you to stop publishing and circulating your "inner-Party documents" on your own - which you continued to do despite our direction till the end of July at least - you hit upon the device of fighting the Party by interviewing individual comrades, picking up from what they said only that which suited you and presenting their stray remarks as profound generalizations. The immense damage that you are doing by all this, the defeatist spirit and contempt for the Party that you are creating, you never see for reasons best known to yourself, reasons which however are becoming more and more evident to many other comrades also.

Perhaps you will say that since Trade Union comrades whom you asked to write for India Today did not keep their promise for they did not have "enough clarity of mind yet to be able to write with confidence", you who possessed that "clarity of mind" and that "confidence" had to do the job yourself on the basis of your "interviews" with the working class leaders.

We know that whatever else may have been your shortcomings in the recent past, "lack of confidence" has not been one of them. While, after the colossal mistakes that we all have committed again and again, all the rest of us have acquired a certain amount of "diffidence", whether in reviewing the past except in a broad and general way - or in giving slogans for the present without pooling together our collective experience and without thorough discussion, you have rushed ahead giving your generalizations about the past and slogans for the present on every issue and for every front.

Such self-confidence on the part of any comrade would have been commendable, provided it had a basis in reality. But what makes you think that you have always correctly and realistically assessed the situation and are therefore competent to carry out single-handed the task which you have taken upon yourself, without being asked to do so by any Party Unit (so far as we know) and publish the results of your efforts?

We wish to remind you that this all-is-smashed-up-nothing-remains is not a new thesis so far as you are concerned. Many of us, including myself, tended to draw too gloomy a picture of the present situation some time back. But with you, this outlook is not a product of this particular period. Ever since the end of the war you have been putting forward this thesis - doggedly, vehemently and despite all the experience to the contrary - the thesis that the picture is dark and gloomy, the thesis that the Party is either smashed up or about to be smashed up.

If you want, if comrades want, we shall substantiate this statement of ours on the basis of the successive "notes" you placed before the CC ever since the end of the war and the speeches you made - notes and speeches which show that you never saw a ray of hope even when we were in the midst

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of the mightiest upsurge in the history of our class and our people. But we do not want to do that and we do not think you will ask up to do that. You know that again and again, your estimation, your predictions, your slogans have proved to be no less wrong than those of anyone else. You know also that on several occasions your estimation and your slogans based on that estimation proved to be more wrong than anyone else - you can also, with perfect justification, say the same about each one of us. You know therefore there is no ground for you to feel any more "self-confident" than others on the basis of your past. This applies to the recent past also, as you know very well.

Ever since we founded the Party, all of us have committed mistakes, all of us have been guilty of left-sectarianism and reformism, all of us have, on different occasions, advocated policies of panicky retreat or rash advance. Our weak Marxism, our inability to grasp the complexity of the situation, our failure to learn from the masses have landed us again and again into serious mistakes. The Party and the movement have paid heavily for this.

But that is only one side of the picture. We have also big achievements to our credit and the achievements are not the monopoly of any particular "period". We have to make a clear break with previous methods of "reviewing" the past, of dividing the history of the Party into "reformist period", "sectarian periods" and so on methods which are a mockery of Marxism-Leninism, which do not enable us to draw correct lessons from our past history and struggles and breed cynicism and contempt for the Party.

We have to re-assess the entire history of the Party, of all "periods", anew, and learn their lessons.

Hence the need for modesty on the part of all of us, hence the necessity for making a sober and balanced estimate of the past by pooling together the collective experience of the Party, hence the necessity of thorough discussion among comrades before giving slogans.

You, however, do not seem to feel the need for all this. You seem to think that, because others have committed mistakes, you have been proved to be right and have therefore won the privilege of spreading confusion by giving your own "analyses" and your own slogans, to preach again your old defeatist and demoralizing thesis which played havoc in the past and is a most serious obstacle in the path of the strengthening of the Party today and to hurl vile slanders against the Party and Party members in the name of fight against sectarianism.

It is not a question of raising false hopes, of creating illusions among our comrades, it is a question of giving them a sober and balanced estimate of the situation. We do not want in the least to minimize the mistakes of the past, nor the damage they have done, but we do want comrades to realize that there is no cause for despondency, no cause for despair. The masses do not look upon us as traitors, as enemies. They are not hostile towards us. Whatever mistakes have been committed by us, we have not betrayed the people and their struggles. We have stood by the people, we have defended them with all our might - even at the cost of our lives. We have not blackened the Red Flag - we have reddened it with our own blood. We stood single-handed against the entire might of the Nehru Government. The people realize this, they respect us and love us. They hate the Congress and the Congress Government for what they did against the Party and regret that they, the people, could not defend us - their Party - effectively against the terroristic offensive of the enemy. They regret that we committed many foolish mistakes, as they call it, and they are happy that we are able, in many areas, to come in their midst again, hold their meetings and lead them. Released Communists are greeted by tens of thousands everywhere. The program of the Party and the Election Manifesto have been hailed by them.

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Such is the experience of comrades in all provinces where we have restarted mass work in earnest. The masses hate the Government as never before and look upon us as the Party that can lead them. They have seen the faces of all parties and they know who are their real friends.

Such is the experience even of Kanpur as can be seen from the columns of Naya Sabera. One need only refer you to the meeting addressed by Aruna Asaf Ali and the mighty gathering that cheered Comrade Yusuf on 2 September.

This is what corresponds to the reality and not the defeatist, demoralized and demoralizing picture you have drawn.

When our Secretary met you in June, he drew your attention to the editorial of the first issue of India Today - in which you had written a lot about the "current wave of frustration", about "our suffering people" and about the "broken hearts of Indian patriots" but said not a word about the colossal growth of political awakening in the country, the indignation and hatred against the Congress, the struggle of the people, the urge for militant unity. You based yourself on the "frustrated" upper stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie and not on the masses and this you thought was "a scientific analysis of the Indian problems". In the whole editorial there was not a word about the struggles of the masses, even about their awakening.

All this was pointed out to you but it does not seem to have had any effect.

You either do not see the masses at all, or even if you do, you see only the "suffering masses" and not the fighting masses - a petty-bourgeois humanitarian and not proletarian revolutionary outlook.

A remark of Ashok Bose which you have printed is: "Never again shall we let anyone play with the Mazdoor Sabha, never again shall we let a false sense of loyalty render us passive". Comrade Ashok expressed before you, a Party member, resentment against the way things had been done in the past and about his determination, not to allow a false sense of loyalty to disrupt mass organizations. But what object could you have in publishing this in the open press unless you wanted to undermine all discipline and unity inside the Party - unity and discipline which are being built again - and make the Party an object of ridicule?

We have just now seen the September number of India Today in which you have come out openly against the slogans of the Party, under the heading "Demagogy of the left". This is what you write, in your own name, on page 5:

"IT HAS SADLY TO BE ADMITTED THAT THE SLOGANS ADVANCED BY THE LEFTS ARE LEFT ONLY IN WORDS, BUT IN REALITY, CONSTITUTE IRRESPONSIBLE DEMAGOGY.

"One of the slogans from some of the left elements is to withdraw the Kashmir issue from the UNO. The sample answer to this is that it cannot be done without India withdrawing from the UNO itself. If this bankrupt counsel is glorified as consistent with anti-imperialism, how will the persistent efforts of People's China to get into the UNO be slandered. It is just mouthing the left brand of bourgeois-nationalist isolationist demagogy when the urgent task is to think out a concrete course of action that will cut out Anglo-American imperialist intervention and lead to a peaceful solution on the basis of democratic principles." (Under-lines ours.)

You know well that it is not "some of the left elements" but the Communist Party of India that gave this slogan of withdrawal of the Kashmir issue from the jurisdiction of the UNO. You know that even in the latest document of the Party, "The Election Manifesto" the Nehru Government has been criticized by us for not doing this. You have seen also that the LPPD journal and the PRAVDA with "bourgeois-nationalist-isolationist-demagogy" and "irresponsible demagogy".² At the rate you are going, one would not be surprised if you did even then.

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You are abusing the permission we gave to you to continue your paper. You are using it to vilify the Party and to propagate your own line which has nothing in common with the line of the Party. Appropriating the title of Comrade Rajni Palme Dutt's historic book for your journal, without his permission so far as we know, you are using it to fight the Party, to oppose and ridicule its slogans, to bring the Party into disrepute. Have you ever thought whose cause you are serving thereby? If not that of the enemies of the Party? And you had the audacity some time back to demand that the Centre should direct a bookshop where Party comrades work to compulsorily stock and sell your paper and you threatened to denounce them publicly if they did not do so. What do you take the Party to be? What do you take yourself to be?

We do not want to take any decision on these anti-Party activities of yours - except in a full meeting of the CC. But we want to tell you that you are seriously mistaken if you think that any unit of the Party, any honest Party member, will tolerate the deliberate and persistent defiance of the Party by you.

Please send your reply to this letter immediately so that it can be placed before the CC.

GREETINGS,

PRKASH³FOR SECRETARIAT

P.S. - We are circulating this letter among all Party members.

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1. Comment. The clash between the CPI and Joshi's India Today was first mentioned in early July 1961 by an independent, usually reliable source with contacts in the Indian Home Ministry. The present report goes into considerably greater detail.

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2. Comment. Note that some element of this sentence seems to be missing.

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3. Comment. This name cannot be identified. It is believed to be a cryptonym. There seems no reason to believe that the document is false.

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